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Sliding into first

There was a great turnout last Saturday to the Ice Races held at the Fairgrounds in Minden. While there were not as many cars as previous years, there was still plenty of action. See more photo on page 14. /THOMAS SMITH Staff

Health coalition says province starves public hospitals

by **JAMES MATTHEWS**
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Allowing some medical procedures to be done at private facilities starves public hospitals, says the Ontario Health Coalition.

A new report, entitled Robbing from the public to build the private: The Ford government's hospital privatization scheme, reveals that local hospitals in every region of Ontario have operating rooms sitting idle the majority of the time.

The public has funded local hospitals for more than 70 years to build operating room capacity that is unused while the Ford government is shunting unprecedented public money to private for-profit clinics and hospitals to build new operating rooms, the coalition reports.

In early 2023, the provincial government passed legislation to allow more private clinics to offer certain publicly funded surgeries and procedures. Premier Doug Ford said at the times that it was an effort to cut long wait lists for care. Procedures opened up to private facilities include cataract surgeries, diagnostic imaging and testing, and hip and knee replacement surgeries.

Government said at the time that the move was to address a backlog of those procedures.

For the last year, the coalition researched the unused capacity in local public hospitals through Freedom of Information requests and interviews with surgical staff.

Natalie Mehra, the group's executive director, said they gathered figures from Ontario government budget and expense documents,

see PUBLIC page 4

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Wanderlust leads to photographer's fairy tale

by THOMAS SMITH
Editor

Guenter Horst stands proudly besides his nautre photos. Horst is a local photographer and artist that frequently submits photos to the Times. /THOMAS SMITH Staff

Guenter Horst has seen the world. Born in 1945 in Bremen, Germany, a town which is perhaps most famous for the fairy tale *Die Bremer Stadtmusikanten* or, *The Musicians of Bremen* in which barnyard animals run away for a better life in the city, playing music, stopping burglars, and eventually settling in their dream home.

Horst's father was a shipbuilder, and his mother worked in a grocery store. Growing up in postwar Germany was not easy. His parents sheltered himself and his fraternal brother from any news and mentions of World War I and World War II.

"My parents never spoke about the war or anything. When there was something on television. Us little boys, we had to go into the kitchen or bedrooms when Dad was watching the news. Because he had gone through World War One or World War Two. He did not want us to listen to what they had to say on the radio or t.v. at the time. We did not know too much about the war at the time we were little. Dad did not want to talk about it, he had been through many things." explains Horst, stoically.

"It wasn't easy."

As a young adult, Horst learned the trade of carpentry in Germany. At 18 years old, Horst's wanderlust was too strong to resist, whilst also seeking a better life for himself and for his potential future family.

In 1963, Horst joined a West German crew of a cargo ship. With the ship, Horst traveled through the canals, St Lawrence River, all the way to Chicago. On one stop in the Toronto harbour, Horst met with his twin brother, Manfred, who had already lived in Canada for one year. Horst promised him that he would return to Canada the next year, completing his five-year voyage around the world. Horst's journey took him around all the corners around North America, all across Europe, and to South America. Horst clearly recalls his rescue from the M.S. Kremsertor by a 845 Naval Air Squadron helicopter off of Plymouth, England. His ship sank due to a heavy storm, and everyone luckily survived. Horst's rank upon retiring from the seas was that of 1st Steward.

"At that time [in Germany], there was no big money for any of us here," explains Horst. "Even our family."

"When I came to Montreal, that's where I started. When we were in Montreal I called my brother and told him that we were in the harbour in Montreal. He was living in Ajax at the time, so it took him five hours to come get me, so I left in the morning and got there in the afternoon. From there, we went to Etobicoke because at that time they were living in an apartment building, and that is where I moved in."

Horst came to Montreal with $600 in his pocket, his life savings. With his carpentry experience, he began work as a cabinetmaker with an Austrian factory owner in Toronto. At the time, there was a large population of German immigrants in Toronto, with German clubs serving his neighborhood and large German events such as Oktoberfest in Kitchener.

Knowing little to no English, the only person Horst could speak with was his boss.

"All I knew were the numbers 1-10 and yes or no. When I was by myself, I could go into the grocery store and look at items." says Horst.

Horst recalls listening to Radio-Luxembourg while working on the cargo ship which may have been his first introduction to the English language.

"I liked the music in English. Whether it was the Beatles or the Rolling Stones, I put my ear really close to the speaker, to listen to it." Radio-Luxembourg was a multilingual radio station he could occasionally pick up during his voyages.

Horst remembers his brother fondly. While asking whether they were fraternal or identical he simply responded, "I was 10 minutes younger!" with a laugh and giant grin on his face.

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They were fraternal twins.

"I learned English from watching television. Getting a newspaper while I was sitting on the streetcar every morning to go to work. Many times, when you go on the streetcar, people leave the paper on the seat for the next person. So, I picked it up, looked at the pictures and saw there was something written underneath, but I had no idea."

Horst remembers the different communities that lived around him. One man from Italy told Horst that he did not know how to say some things in Italian, only in English after living in Canada for so long.

"When you come to Canada from overseas, you never lose your language, ever."

Later in their lives, with Horst being a divorcee and Thea Zubyk being a widow, Zubyk responded to an advertisement in Deutsche-Presse, a German newspaper published in Toronto. The advertisement, in German, sought an honest and loving person, seeking friendship for a man aged 51, slim, non-smoker, non-drinker.

Although Zubyk sent a photo and a reply to Horst, Zubyk was quick to let me know that he has yet to supply a photo of himself. The couple's first language spoken at home is German. However, they often will switch languages interchangeably, often mid conversation with each other.

Zubyk has a long connection to Haliburton County, with her late second husband having a cottage on Hall's Lake. Horst was living in Bancroft at the time he published an advertisement seeking a relationship.

"I always loved cottage country," says Horst.

"I'm gonna take her out for supper. His friend said, don't take her to McDonald's, don't be cheap!" recalls Zubyk, with a laugh.

So he took her to Swiss Chalet. It must have gone well, as the pair will be celebrating their 27th anniversary this year. The couple moved to their dream home on Bobcaygeon Road in 2006, with a beautiful view of a farmer's field and the tree line.

Throughout his life, the men in Horst's family have been artists.

"It started with my father, and it started out with oil paintings," explains Horst. "Then my twin brother, he learned something from my father about oil painting. Then, he did the same thing in Canada and after a while he started in photography."

Horst was in love with his brother›s photos of moose, deer, and other wildlife from Haliburton County.

Horst's hobby of photography quickly became one of his deepest passions. Purchasing a professional level of camera with a variety of lenses, Horst began submitting his nature photography to newspapers such as the Minden Times, The Highlander, and the Haliburton Echo.

"At that time the cameras were not the greatest, compared to the ones we have today." Horst explains, pulling out his brand-new Pro Max 15 iPhone. One that is frequently said to rival that of professional cameras. Even with a professional camera and a variety of lenses, Horst prefers to take his photographs on his brand-new iPhone due to the phone's picture quality and transportability.

"Most of the time, I take all of the photos with this iPhone because I found out that they come out so crystal clear."

Horst will find beauty in the smallest and often unnoticed beauties in nature, such as the high snow piles on Bobcaygeon Road.

"It may not look like something, but for me, you know, it looks like something that many people don't look at. Or many couldn't care less."

Horst seeks to capture beautiful moments in nature. He has no plans on taking pictures of people, such as a wedding.

"No animal is going to complain and say 'oh, that picture does not look right.' When you take a nature picture, I can take a picture of a deer," says Horst with a laugh. "You never have to take the deer to court or anything."

Horst is not in it for the money and would rather have his dozens of nature photos that decorate his walls, than profit from wedding photography.

Horst's dream is to one day take a close-up picture of a wolf in the wild. His favorite photography destinations include the Scotch Line landfill where he can take pictures of bears and eagles, at the cottage, or taking photos of deer at hunting camps (always careful not to scare them away).

Horst's biggest draw to the Minden area and Haliburton County was his sense of safety compared to the hustle and bustle of the city and the beauty of nature in the area.

Just as The Animals of Bremen, Horst has both found his dream house and his love for the arts, a perfect fairy-tale ending.

Horst's favorite pictures are when he shoots bears, moose, and large flocks of turkeys. Recently, he has expanded his artistic repertoire to include painting and experimental photography. For one artistic shot, he used a cylinder of ice and a candle to capture a beautiful contrast between light and dark, hot, and cold.

Horst's photographs have been featured in several newspaper publications in the county and have even been featured on television programs such as Breakfast Television. He has no plans on slowing down with his hobby.

It was all smiles on Saturday doing the prep work at Godfathers. They have had a wonderful reception to their re-opening and are looking forward to serve some delicious food. /THOMAS SMITH Staff

Godfathers re-opening

by **THOMAS SMITH**
Editor

"It took so long because we could not find staff," explains Sydney Murphy, Office Admin and Corporate Trainer from Godfathers. "There's been a big staffing issue with COVID-19, this store is busy so you can't run it with only four employees. Here, it is so busy you need a lot of staff."

Godfathers is still currently hiring part-time employees.

"We are still looking, you are always going to have turnover,people that go to school in the fall, or go away for the summer.

The main question on everyone's mind: will Godfathers stay open?

"We are hoping," says Murphy. "It will just be a matter of if staff stay. That's really what it comes down to."

There are no changes to the menu.

"We are very traditional. We like to keep our menu so people know what they can order. It usually doesn't change," says Murphy with a laugh.

Murphy and another representative from Godfathers corporate office have been working out of the Minden location to make sure they get staff and make sure staff stay, says Murphy.

"It's been fabulous, the reactions and feedback we have gotten and just happy people, they come in and go 'yay!' or 'finally!', says Murphy with a laugh. "I have been so excited and the weather has definitely contributed. We have had three nice sunny days to get started."

"It's been wonderful," says Murphy, "I couldn't ask for better."

"We don't have delivery yet," explains Murphy. "We are going to make sure we staff the store inside before we find someone to deliver outside."

"They have been really good, really receptive. For all them being strangers to each other, they have all collaborated really well and understand what teamwork is."

"They're all from the surrounding areas and I was surprised that nobody really knew each other," says Murphy with a laugh.

"We had a customer last night that was like 'we had to stop and get pizza, but we are going to our friend's house and he's making us pizza' and I was like 'then why are you getting pizza?' and he says 'well, because you guys were open'.

Needless to say, the re-opening of Godfathers in Minden has been met with great excitement.

"Fingers crossed staff stay, that's all I say," says Murphy.

During the summer months, the Minden Godfathers location becomes their busiest store.

While the future of Godfathers is uncertain, their team is happily serving hot pizza for the time being.

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MINDEN HILLS CULTURAL CENTRE

• Archie Stouffer Elementary School presents their 1st annual student exhibit with the theme of what Minden means to the artist. Selections for our permanent collection and new acquisitions are also on display. The exhibits will be on display in the Agnes Jamieson Gallery until March 30. Hours: Tuesday – Saturday from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Admission is by donation.

MINDEN HILLS Cultural Centre

• The Knitting Village provides free knitting lessons for children ages 11-14. The first drop-in class is scheduled for Tuesday, March 5 from 3:30 - 4:30 p.m. at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre, 176 Bobcaygeon Rd. All materials are supplied.

• Celebrate International Women's Day with the documentary Under the Willow Tree at the Minden Hills Cultural Centre on Thursday, March 7 at 5 p.m.

WINTER PARKING

From November 1 to April 30, 2024 overnight parking is illegal from midnight to 8:00 a.m. on township roadways and parking lots. Parking in the turning circle of a cul-de-sac is prohibited during all hours. Vehicles parked in areas that interferes with snow removal will be towed away and/or ticketed at the owner's expense.

HOUSEHOLD BATTERY RECYCLING

You can now recycle your household batteries at any of the Township's Waste Disposal Sites.
Properly recycling batteries helps to reclaim rare metals so they can be re-used to make new products. This reduces the need to mine new raw materials and helps build a strong circular economy. To avoid the risk of sparks/fires, you need to tape the terminal on some batteries before you store or recycle them. Drop off your batteries at least every 3 months to avoid corrosion.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

We are currently seeking energetic and highly motivated individuals for the following positions:

• Fire Chief • Public Works Seasonal Labourer • Parks Summer Students • Cultural Centre Summer Students

Please visit our website at www.mindenhills.ca/careers/ for a complete list of available positions and how to apply.

COUNCIL MEETINGS VIRTUAL, IN-PERSON

Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted with a hybrid model of in-person (Council Chambers) and electronic participation in accordance with the Municipal Act. Meetings begin at 9:00 AM unless otherwise noted. The scheduled upcoming meetings are:

• February 29 – Regular Council Meeting • March 5 – Special Meeting of Council and Closed Session • March 14 – Regular Council Meeting • March 28 – Regular Council Meeting

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by attending in-person or via the live-stream link on the Township CivicWeb Portal at https://mindenhills.civicweb.net/Portal/MeetingTypeList.aspx . Visit our website for more information.

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETINGS – MARCH 5, 2024

The Council of the Corporation of the Township of Minden Hills will continue 2024 Budget and Business Plan Deliberations and will review follow-up items from the previous budget meeting discussions during its Special Meeting of Council scheduled for **March 5, 2024**. Council will also hold a Closed Session during this meeting. The Special Council meeting will commence at 9:00 AM in the Council Chambers, located at 7 Milne Street, Minden ON.

• Note a tentative date has been scheduled for an additional Special Meeting of Council to Adopt and Finalize the 2024 Budget on **Tuesday, March 26, 2024 at 9:00 AM.**

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by joining the **live-stream link, available on the township website at** www.mindenhills.ca/council/. We encourage those wishing to view the meeting to also download the agenda, as it will not be displayed during the streaming process. **Meeting agendas can be downloaded by visiting the township website** at www.mindenhills.ca/council/. can be downloaded by visiting the township website at www.mindenhills.ca/council/.

SPRING LOAD RESTRICTIONS (HALF LOADS) IN EFFECT

Half Load weight restrictions are placed on roadways and posted each year in the spring for approximately 1-2 months. Persons contravening this regulation will be prosecuted under Section 122 of The Highway Traffic Act. Please watch for and obey posted signage. Visit www.mindenhills.ca for updates.

IMPORTANT TAX INFORMATION

The 2024 Interim tax bills will be mailed no later than February 29, 2024. If you have not received your bill(s) prior to the March due date, please contact our office. The Interim tax bill will be payable in two installments: March 22 and May 24, 2024. This bill has been calculated using the 2023 annualized assessment multiplied by 50% of the 2023 applicable tax rate(s).

Payments received after February 12th may not be reflected on your tax bill. Please note that any overdue amounts shown on your tax bill do not include penalty/interest for February and March. Please contact our office for a current balance at 705-286-1260 or email admin@mindenhills.ca.

Property owners are responsible to provide to the Municipal Office written notification of any address change. As per the Ontario Municipal Act, 2001, failure to receive your tax bill does not exempt penalty charges from being applied to a tax account.

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Public money used to dismantle health care: coalition

from page 1

media reports, contracts, and accountability agreements to provide a litany of examples of much higher costs and large funding increases provided by the Ford government to for-profit corporation clinics, hospitals, and staffing agencies.

"At the same time, the government has imposed dollar cuts, deficits, and wage caps on public hospitals, robbing them of the ability to attract and retain staff and use their existing operating room capacity," she said.

Alexandria, Brockville, Cambridge, Hawkesbury, Kitchener, London, North Bay, Oakville, Sault Ste. Marie, St. Catharines, Southampton, and Wiarton are communities that have functional operating rooms that are unused.

Hospitals in Alliston, Almonte, Barrie, Bowmanville, Carleton Place, Collingwood, Cornwall, Kingston, Meaford, Nepean, Niagara Falls, Orillia, Oshawa, Ottawa, Pembroke, Peterborough, Toronto, and Welland have operating rooms that are closed the majority of the time.

Their closed either late afternoons, evenings, overnight and/or on weekends.

Mehra said Queen's Park has imposed real dollar cuts on public hospitals, pushing them into service closures and deficits, while funding for-profit hospitals and clinics with increases up to and over 300%. Ontario funds its public hospitals at the lowest rate of all provinces.

The province has funded private for-profit hospitals at double the rate per surgery than it funds public hospitals and has funded private for-profit ophthalmology clinics across Ontario at 21 per cent to 56 per cent more for each cataract surgery.

She said the coalition has found that government has refused to act on the for-profit staffing agencies that are charging up to three times more than public hospitals for staff, having escalated their prices by more than 70 per cent since Ford took office, while imposing wage caps and real dollar cuts on public hospital staff.

The health care budget has been underspent, shunting billions to contingency fund and budget surplus, while leaving hospitals in unprecedented crisis, Mehra said.

"Hundreds of millions of dollars in public money is being used to dismantle and privatize our public hospitals, robbing the public to build the private," she said. "A few for-profit corporations are being enriched by the Ford government's privatization scheme while our public hospitals and patients pay the price.

"It is beyond time that there is a rigorous investigation into who is benefitting from these policy choices and what their connections are to this government because the costs and threats to our local public hospitals and the future of our single-tier public health system are very real and urgent."

Congrats to ASES Intermediate volleyball teams

The ASES Girls Intermediate Volleyball team were triumphant at the Division A County Volleyball Tournaments this February and went undefeated. Congratulations to the athletes, coaches, and those involved! Way to go girls! /Photo submitted

The ASES Intermediate Boys Volleyball dominated the Division A County Volleyball Tournaments this February, going undefeated. Congratulations to the athletes, coaches and everyone involved! Way to go lads! /Photo submitted

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MINDEN ONTARIO

AH talks facilities fee structure during budget discussion

by JAMES MATTHEWS
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Algonquin Highlands will consider charging higher user fees to non-residents at recreational facilities.

The township council scheduled two days of discussions in an effort to nail down its 2024 capital and operating budget. The tax increase was at 7.4 per cent on the first day but council had whittled the tax increase down to 6.18 per cent on the second day Feb. 22.

Council will revisit the draft budget in March.

Mayor Liz Danielsen said her goal was to have the tax rate increase below seven per cent.

"At the bottom line, below seven (per cent)," she said. "I know that that's not necessarily the recommended approach to take, but if somebody said to me what's the per cent increase on your taxes. I wanted to be able to say seven.

"I know we don't have to be the same as everybody else."

But, she said, Haliburton County residents tend to compare neighbouring municipalities.

"I've heard a lot of results from smaller, similar eastern Ontario municipalities that are in the between six and seven per cent range," she said. "I know it's a higher increase than we've had before, but I think everyone has seen the cost of living has done a real serious number to us."

An increase of less than $25 for every $100,000 of assessed property value isn't too bad for most people, said Councillor Sabrina Richards.

"But there's a lot of people out there who are on a fixed income," Richards said. "That (increase) hurts them."

"We all know that," Danielsen said.

"I know that we all know that," Richards said, but taxpayers should benefit from cost savings achieved by staff.

"You've gone beyond where we want to land," Danielsen said.

"I think that we can help the bottom line of this by pulling a little bit more from reserves," said Richards. "I'd like to see us down to about four to five per cent (tax increase)."

Coun. Lisa Barry said she'd like to see the increase between six and seven per cent.

Deputy Mayor Jennifer Dailloux said the goal is to keep costs as low as possible while offering the best services to residents.

"Picking a number has always felt problematic for me," Dailloux said. "I think taking more from reserves is a false friend. I really struggle with the idea of taking from reserves so that this year we can feel a bit better about our percentage points."

Coun. Julia Shortreed said she'd love an increase as low as four per cent. But she'll be happy with anything under a seven per cent tax increase.

Treasurer Jean Hughes said council would have to slice about $75,000 from the draft budget to achieve a tax increase as low as 5.68 per cent.

"Or fund an extra $75,000 from reserves," Hughes said.

Chris Card, the township's parks, recreation, and trails manager, walked township council through some portions of the first draft of the 2024 municipal operating and capital budget.

Card asked that $212,141 be included in this year's budget for the water trails or backcountry canoe route program. That's a 36 per cent increase over last year's budgeted $155,788.

"This budget captures everything related with our backcountry canoe program, including all of the staffing all of our equipment, all equipment maintenance including all trucks," he said.

Dailloux said residents chip in a lot of money by way of fees to subsidize the trail network and other recreational facilities. She asked if there would be support for a fee structure by which people who live outside Algonquin Highlands pay a higher fee to avail of the recreational amenities.

Township residents pay taxes that support recreation but residents of neighbouring municipalities don't. And that's an unfair division "of financial burden," she said.

Dailloux said that could be a means to lower the budget figures of some of the line items requested by the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Trails.

Richards said she's asked council on a number of occasions to take a look at higher fees for non-residents.

"Including the campsites," she said. "I don't think we should just target Lake of Bays. It should be anybody outside of our township should be paying more than our taxpayers."

> "I think taking more from reserves is a false friend. I really struggle with the idea of taking from reserves so that this year we can feel a bit better about our percentage points."
>
> — DEPUTY MAYOR JENNIFER DAILLOUX

"It's common in a lot of communities," said Shortreed.

"It's certainly possible with our software programs to be able to differentiate between the two," Card said.

Dailloux said she's paid more for a swimming lesson in Huntsville than some of the people treading the water of lanes beside her.

"I think it's a very normal thing," Dailloux said. "And there would be good examples in the local area of how others have decided to do the (fee) ratio."

Card said any discussion about a dual fee structure will have to consider the timing of implementation.

"Because we set our fees for the year prior to the year starting, we do post those, and we've been taking reservations for the entire year, with the campsites specifically, with those fees in place," he said. "The same for any bookings for facilities.

"The most seamless transition would be to review it this year and implement it at the start of next year."

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Musings on pizza

I LOVE PIZZA.

I jumped at the opportunity to interview Godfathers about their re-opening, as well as the issues that they faced with finding staff. Pizza is my go-to for any occasion. Birthday? Pizza. Anniversary? Pizza. Random Tuesday night? Pizza.

My favourite pizza? Well, it depends on my mood.

My go-to za is one that has more cheese on each slice than one person should legally consume.

If I am feeling zesty, I love the combination of sweet and spicy with the combo of spicy peppers and pineapple.

THOMAS SMITH
Editor

Yes, I am one of those people that enjoy pineapple on pizza. In fact, I think the imagination is the limit for what you can put on your pizza.

Let's be honest though, the real draw to getting pizza? The garlic strips. These deliciously greasy, garlicky bread is pure ambrosia. Sydney Murphy gave me a hot tip. Instead of ordering pizza, order a garlic strip base, then add sauce and toppings to it. Absolute game changer. My life will never be the same.

The biggest question we all have is, will they stay open?

They will only stay open if they continue to have the staff to run their operation.

Besides management positions, they are only willing to pay people minimum wage.

Clearly, there is an issue here if they can't keep employees or attract teenagers to sling some dough.

The student minimum wage in Haliburton County is $15.60, which is still under a liveable wage. Either way, I am sure that the more jobs that are available to people in Haliburton County, the better.

Murphy says that the main reason they cannot keep staff is because people do not drive. With the rising costs of car insurance, upkeep, and purchasing a vehicle, I am not shocked that young people in Minden do not have access to a vehicle. With the average cost of car insurance in Ontario being $1655 according to thinkesnure.ca, monthly car payments would quickly consume the paycheque of a teen working a minimum wage job. Especially with the stress and demands of succeeding in academics and in extra curricular activities, I know less and less people whose children have decided that they are not going to get a job.

For now, many people in Minden have expressed their joy to me that they no longer have to drive all the way to Haliburton to indulge in delicious pizza.

In the past, I have had pizza that is amazing from the Godfathers Minden location. On some days, the pizza was stellar, but on others, it was burnt, or undercooked. I remain hopefully optimistic that the staff that have been trained to the best of Godfathers's abilities. The positive reception of their opening is a great sign that they are serving a delicious slice. While I am disappointed to hear that Godfathers has no plans to offer delicious desserts such as apple fritters, expect to see me grab some hot fresh pizza pies this week.

Strange addiction

THE OTHER day I was having a nice visit with my horde of fly rods and reels, as well as dozens of fully packed fly boxes, more leaders and tippets than I could probably use in a lifetime, two top tier fly tying vises, boxes laden with tying tools, and dozens of Tupperware totes filled with fly-tying material, plus the accompanying strike indicators, fly lines, and about four tons of split shot, and I thought, "You know, I might have a problem."

It turns out that the problem is I don't have a quality 10-weight muskie rod and reel – yet.

STEVE GALEA
Beyond 35

Even though this is true, take it from me, it is not the sort of thing you mention to a spouse who has no understanding of the sublime high a 10-weight, muskie rod and reel will bring. For these people are prone to asking silly questions like, "When's the last time you fished for muskie?"

In fact, the mere mention of the need for a 10-weight muskie rod might be used to further bolster your spouse's tired old argument about you being a tackle junkie – which is a phrase she had never even heard of before one of my thoughtless fishing buddies uttered it out loud in front of her. For the record, I suspect this was out of pure spite, simply because I out fished him. Also, for the record, he has a 10-weight muskie rod, so who's the junkie now?

The truth is I am not a tackle junkie. I could quit buying fishing tackle any time I like.

But what's to like about that, I ask you? Nothing, that's what.

Also, the term tackle junkie is kind of offensive to me and my similarly afflicted friends. It connotes images of us huddling together in dark places to get high on the products we have just bought. Which is totally wrong. The fly-fishing club is very well lit.

I am not a tackle junkie. I am a prepared angler.

A prepared angler has the tackle for any given situation she or he will encounter. For instance, if I find myself in a situation where I need to fish for near-sighted perch who hold slightly progressive leanings, I will have lures or flies that are not only visible, but politically correct and inoffensive.

Some people would call this "nerding out". But that's only if you name your fishing rods. And this means all of them – not just Roland or Veronique.

Will I admit that maybe my fly-fishing hobby has gotten a little out of hand? No, I will not. After all, it's not like I wear my fishing hat to bed anymore.

I will concede that I am jonesing for the time when I can access open water again, but only because it is almost impossible to land a fly cast in an 8-inch hole drilled through the ice on a windy day. It also seems a little desperate, if I'm going to be honest.

In any case, while all this gear that's clogging up my basement seems a little excessive right now, soon me and all my "addicted" friends will be able to put this stuff to good use once more. Spring is just around he corner.

And, just between you and me, me, Roland and Veronique can hardly wait.

InOtherWords

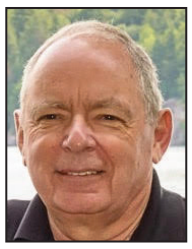
Columns and Letters to the Editor

A mean-spirited ministry

I'M IN deep doo-doo with the Ontario government bureaucracy.

I awoke today to a Ministry of Natural Resources email telling me I am being fined for not reporting that I didn't hunt last year. The fine of $25 will be added to my licensing fees when I apply for a 2024 licence.

Reporting is mandatory for anyone who buys a licence to hunt turkey, moose, deer, elk, wolf or bear. Hunters must report online, or by telephone, whether they hunted, what they harvested, where, what animals they spotted and how many days they spent hunting.



JIM POLING SR.
From Shaman's Rock

I didn't know all this, or more accurately, perhaps I did and forgot. I do have a vague recollection that I did try to report online but was told to try another time. A friend has tried four times to report but each time has been told to try again.

At any rate, it's my bad. If I fail to report a second time, I won't be allowed to apply for a licence again.

The ministry says that mandatory reporting helps it to set management policies for monitoring wildlife populations, seasons and bag limits. That is important but fining hunters who don't report on time is way over the top.

Instead of sending a nasty you-are-being-fined email, why not a friendly reminder email encouraging cooperation to improve wildlife management and sport hunting? Each takes the same amount of time and energy.

As my mother used to say: "You catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar."

I suspect the ministry's get-tough approach results from frustration. Apparently 10 per cent of Ontario's 600,000 licensed hunters are not reporting. That's tens of thousands of hunters forgetting or ignoring mandatory reporting.

That's enraging the ministry bureaucrats who want 100 per cent reporting. Because they are not getting it, they are turning to Vladimir Putin techniques.

There are indications that the ministry is considering more Putin-like tricks to get all hunters to cooperate. It is reviewing the "penalty framework" to see if there are other ways to force hunters to report.

One assumes that means bigger financial penalties, or (good grief!) perhaps even jail time.

Instead of showing visionary leadership to get hunters working with it as partners, the ministry has opted for a mean-spirited approach that treats non-reporting hunters as criminals.

The problem here is that we elect politicians who let bureaucrats run the government. Left on their own, bureaucrats run lousy governments. They sit in cozy city offices and make decisions based on their thinking and not the thinking of people who live in the real world.

The only hunters the bureaucrats in Toronto get close to are the street gangs outside their offices. The downtown drug wars are the only wildlife they get to see.

The ministry needs to push its bureaucrats off their butts, away from their computers and out among hunters.

What better way to do that than to reverse its disastrous Frost Centre decisions. Buy the place back and move its bureaucrats into the once well-equipped buildings that have sat mainly empty and unused since 2004.

The Frost Centre, in the centre of the Haliburton County bushlands, was for more than 80 years the office of many ministry employees dedicated to Nature and wildlife. That's the way it should be again.

Making it that way again would put ministry bureaucrats close to the hunters. They would have opportunities to see hunters and talk to them.

Looking out the Frost Centre office windows they might even see some wildlife, like a deer or a wild turkey, instead of a stoned human or discarded drug paraphernalia.

The $25 failure-to-report penalty can be appealed on medical grounds, but the chances of winning an appeal are razor thin. You pretty much have to prove you couldn't report because you were close to death. Heart attack, stroke, hospitalization count but illnesses like influenza and COVID-19 do not.

Also, the ministry says you must get a doctor to fill out forms saying what was wrong with you.

For my part, I don't plan to appeal or to pay the $25 failure-to-report fine because, despite having bought a hunting licence every year for the last 60-plus years, I don't intend to buy another.

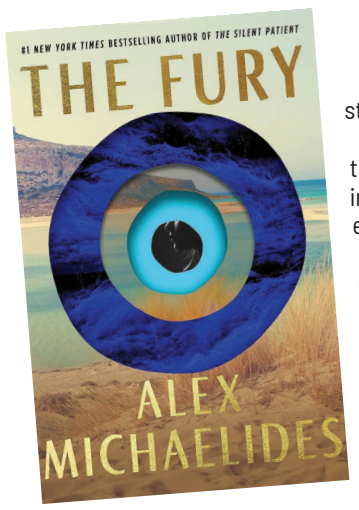
Minden Memories

A lumber camp's cook poses during some downtime, circa 1927. /Photo submitted by Minden Hills Cultural Centre

Feb 8/78
WINNERS
Minden's two ladies curling teams combined forces three weeks ago to take the District Tankard Playdowns at Beaverton. In the double rink competition both teams competed for an aggregate score to down Beaverton, Lindsay and Sutton. They will now play in the division finals at Bracebridge. Back row, left to right: Patti Prentice, Hazel Maxwell, Gwen Cox, Dale Austin, Catharine Kellett and Eleanor Hall. Kneeling, left to right: Toos Feld left and Pony Obee.
by sue spence

Photo of the combined forces of curling teams from Minden. The team's victories over Beaverton, Lindsay and Sutton took them to the division finals in Bracebridge. /Photo submitted by Eleanor Hall

HCPL's Book of the Week



This is a tale of murder.

Or maybe that's not quite true. At its heart, it's a love story, isn't it?

Lana Farrar is a reclusive ex-movie star and one of the most famous women in the world. Every year, she invites her closest friends to escape the English weather and spend Easter on her idyllic private Greek island.

But this time, as the guests were trapped there overnight, old friendships concealed hatred and a desire for revenge. What followed was a game of cat and mouse a battle of wits, full of twists and turns, building to an unforgettable climax. The night ended in violence and death, as one guest was found murdered.

The Fury by Alex Michaelides is available to borrow from the Haliburton County Public Library.

Be with me

I DON'T WANT to want to die alone, she said. That's why Elfrieda, the beautiful and talented concert pianist with the devoted husband, wants her sister Yolanda to take her to Switzerland to have a medically assisted death. She wants to die and has tried several times, for no good reason other than that living is unbearably painful.

Marion Toews' book, *All My Puny Sorrows*, was published in 2014, two years before Canada legislated Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID). Four years after Toews' sister ended her life. And many more years after her father kneeled in front of a train. And her niece took a dive into a rushing river. She knows the pain of living with suicide – before, during, after. Her main characters are women, and she paints them brilliantly: they're smart, sassy, resilient, challenged, imperfect in the extreme. They have children with different fathers, take cruises when their daughters are in the psych ward, have desperate indiscriminate sex, expect their adolescent children to fill adult gaps. They're eminently loveable. And relatable, if we're feeling brave.

FAY MARTIN
Poke, Peel, Pair, Ponder

Yoli is the unsuccessful sister, but she is the only one whom Elf can trust to make the Switzerland arrangements, even though she's the one who doesn't easily have the means. Toews is a gifted writer which sustains the book's excruciating honesty. (There's also a movie, same name, equally well done, available for rental on Apple+ TV. If you like your whisky straight, try the movie; if you prefer a bit of mix or ice, the book's your bet.)

The federal government just kicked the can of expanding MAID legislation three years down the road (conveniently after the next election). They want assurance that adequate mental health resources – a provincial jurisdiction -- are available. Everyone who must create or vote on that legislation, or implement it, should be required to read Teows so they understand in their gut the current – and maybe forever - shortcomings of the mental health system.

Elf's experience is that it requires the person who wants to die to change their mind before they will be helped, surely a different approach than in most areas of medicine. Why? Perhaps because the medical system has no idea why some people are unbearably unhappy or otherwise mentally malfunctioning, and because they don't understand it, they don't know how to fix it. Yoli's take on Elf's time in hospital is that the medical staff bullies the patients into saying and doing 'normal' things (eating, socializing, taking pills) so that if they improve, the medical profession can take credit. If they don't, well, medicine tried its best. If they're fooled, well, that's one less patient to worry about.

So it's probably a good idea to work a little harder before the legislation is expanded to allow mental illness as a sole reason for MAID. The rate of medically-assisted deaths has grown faster in Canada than in any other country that permits assisted death. In 2022 MAID accounted for 4% of Canadian deaths; it took the Netherlands 14 years to get to that percentage. Some worry that the rapid growth is attributable to the lack of support to live a dignified life, which makes a dignified death a reasonable option.

This will be a problem on steroids if the door is opened to those with mental illness. One in five people in Canada say they have mental health challenges. Not all are equally debilitating, diagnosis is (apologies, psychiatry) a crap shoot, treatment is frequently unsatisfactory, recovery is often mysterious. How can we know when we are providing the scope and quality of services to people with mental illness that would allow us to ethically offer medical assistance in dying? Yoli turned herself inside out with that question; it won't be much easier even with the objectivity of professionalism.

But objective professionalism is also difficult to achieve. It's so tempting to blame the patient – or, for the many who never make it to treatment, the person -- for the 'choice' they make when the official pick list is so sparse and unimaginative. Nor is it likely to improve any time soon. Mental health gets 7% of the health budget. It is under-researched, under-resourced, with little agreement about effective intervention or how to define 'cured'. It gets lumped in with 'bad' behaviours that stigmatize it. We have been socialized to see maladaptive behaviour as moral lapse.

It's the nature of choices available to people with mental illness that is the pivot point in the debate. One in five is a scary proposition: that's a big probability you could be or know an Elf or a Yoli.

Kinder registration now open

Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) has opened registration for students starting Kindergarten in September 2024.

TLDSB offers both junior and senior Kindergarten programs, where our youngest students develop a strong foundation for learning in all areas.

At this stage, students grow through play-based learning and small group instruction with caring educators. Students will learn about language and math, engage in healthy physical activities and the arts, and develop socially and emotionally through interaction with their peers and educators who guide them.

Parents/guardians of children who are turning four in 2024 are encouraged to visit the Kindergarten Registration page on tldsb.ca to register their child(ren) and learn more about the programs. To find out which elementary school your child(ren) will attend based on the home address, use the School Locator. All contact information for our elementary schools can be found on the Board Directory.

September may seem like a far way away, but it's important for TLDSB to know how many students are enrolled so that staffing and spaces for the upcoming school year can be made. TLDSB asks all parents/guardians to register their child(ren) by March 31.

If you have further questions, contact your child(ren)'s local elementary school.

Submitted

HALIBURTON COUNTY HUSKIES

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Crafting up a storm

The UnFinished Objects (UFO) Craft Group met for the first time this past Friday since their hiatus. Located at the Cultural Centre, the group offers the opportunity for crafters and community members to gather, socialize, and work on crafting projects. The group meets one Friday each month. No registration involved, all are welcome! /THOMAS SMITH Staff

TLDSB launches student census

Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) is excited to kick off the launch of the 2024 Student Census for all students and their parents/guardians.

"As part of our commitment to continued progress towards equity and inclusion for all, the Board is conducting a census that will collect identity-based demographic information," said TLDSB director of education, Wes Hahn. "The data collected from students will provide the school system with valuable information that will help to improve strategic planning, programming, and services with a focus on student achievement and engagement."

For students in Kindergarten to Grade 6, one census per student is to be completed by parents/guardians with their child online or on paper. Paper copies are available upon request at the school. Grade 7 to 12 students will have the opportunity to complete the census in class prior to the closing date of Friday, Mar. 8.

The Student Census is confidential and voluntary, but not anonymous. Individual responses, and all personal student and family information will remain strictly confidential protected under the freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation.

You can learn more about the census by visiting the Student Census page on the Board's website.

Submitted

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Rare duck spotted in Minden waters

by **VIVIAN COLLINGS**
Times Staff

You might have noticed the plethora of Mallards swimming and splashing around together in the Gull River on your last stroll through town.

Next time, look a little closer.

Nestled in with the group is someone who looks a little different.

A lone Canvasback Duck, the largest of its genus, is doing its best to fit in with the crowd.

"It's very rare for a Canvasback to make its way here," said local naturalist Ed Poropat. "It would be termed a vagrant because its migration path is actually quite a ways west from where we live. It breeds commonly in the northern Prairies."

He said their migration path is almost a diagonal line across the middle of Canada, going down through the Prairies and into Ontario.

"From there, they spread out for migration. There's decent numbers of them in the winter down in Lake Erie and other parts of southwestern Ontario," Poropat said.

Poropat has only seen two others in his years of living in the Highlands.

"But it is an especially rare bird for Haliburton County and Algonquin Park. This is the third county record that I'm aware of," he said.

He's not sure why the single bird has made its way up to our waters, but as long as there is open water, it's likely here for the winter.

"It's considered a vagrant, sometimes birds get blown off course, but there's really no other explanation for it," he said.

It was first spotted in the open water of the Drag River in Head Lake Park in Haliburton.

"My wife was the one that found it, and it was there for at least a couple of weeks. Then we had a really cold snap and the river froze up."

Along with 60 or more Mallards, it seems it decided the best course of action was to stick with the locals.

"All of them just headed over to Minden where the river stays open all winter," he said.

A lone Canvasback Duck, rare to the area, floats atop the waters of Gull River in Minden. /Submitted by Ed Poropat

Mallards among us

They have been a reported 70 plus ducks that hangout regularly near the River Cone on Orde Street both in the river and on land. /THOMAS SMITH Staff

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Graduating Huskies player Ian Philips stops for a photo with his family before last Saturday's game against the Caledon Admirals at the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena.

Eyes on the prize

The Huskies celebrated a sweet victory of 6-0, and went on to win the next day's game 2-0 against the North York Rangers. All graduating players and families were celebrated last week. /TIM YANO Special to the *Times*

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Not intended to solicit properties already listed for sale

Send your event listing to classifieds@haliburtonpress.com

Seniors Chair Exercises

When: Thursdays, at 1 p.m.
Where: St. George's Anglican Church, 617 Mountain Street
Safe and gentle exercises for seniors to help with balance, strength and flexibility. Free to join.

Cribbage and Euchre

When: Tuesdays at 2 p.m.
Where: St. George's Anglican Church, 617 Mountain St.
Please join us Tuesdays for cribbage and Euchre at St. George's Anglican Church. With funding from the Government of Ontario. Please contact lynnhiggsthompson@haliburtonanglican.ca for more information.

Super Cash Calendar Draws

When: Second Monday of the month, 6:30 p.m. January until October.
Where: Haliburton Legion
Three tickets pulled per night. First ticket winner receives $100, second ticket $200, and third ticket $500. Winners will be posted every month on www.haliburtonlions.com. Public is welcome to attend the draws at the Lions meetings.

Weekly Meat Rolls

When: Every Saturday, 3 p.m.
Where: Coboconk Legion, Hwy 48 & 35
Join us for our weekly meat draw at the Coboconk Legion. 5 spins for $10. The first 4 rounds are for highest and lowest score with 2 winners per round. The last round is for a prepare-it-yourself dinner for two. Additional spins for this round are available for $2 each. Call 705-454-8127 or email info@coboconklegion.ca for more information.

Student Art Exhibition

When: Feb. 10 - Mar. 30
Where: Agnes Jamieson Gallery, 176 Bobcaygeon Rd. Minden
Archie Stouffer Elementary School and the Agnes Jamieson Gallery present to you a juried exhibition of artwork with the theme 'What does Minden mean to you?' Viewing is available Tuesday to Saturday from 10 am to 4 pm. Admission is by donation. Contact culturalcentre@mindenhills.ca or 705-286-3763 for full details and updates.

Easter Colouring Contest

When: Mar. 1 to 28 at 12 noon
Where: Curry Chevrolet, 5065 County Rd 21
Show off your artistic talent and win Easter goodies. Submit a colouring page in one of the following age categories: 0-4 years, 5-8 years, 9-14 years 15+ years. Prizes awarded for the top two entries in each category. Colouring sheets can be picked up, dropped off, or mailed to the dealership at the address above, or can be scanned and emailed to reception@currychevrolet.ca. Call 705-457-2100 for more information.

Charity Bake Sale

When: Feb 28, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Where: Minden Animal Hospital, 4 Booth Street
Dr. Jenn and her team at the Minden Animal Hospital will be hosting a charity bake sale on Pink Shirt Day (Kindness Day). Cash only. All proceeds are being donated to Turtle Guardians.

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Free income tax clinics remove barriers

by **THOMAS SMITH**
Editor

Central Food Network knows that filing your taxes can be a scary, complicated, and stressful process. In collaboration with the Canadian Revenue Agency, free income tax clinics will be offered in Wilberforce, Minden, and Haliburton. A growing team of volunteers are excited to help the community this tax season.

"This program is a great way for someone who is intimidated by the process and to ensure their taxes are done correctly," says Lindsay Hobbs, Income Tax Clinic Coordinator.

"Tax filing means a lot more than having to pay interest or get refunds."

Not filing your taxes can cut off crucial subsidies. Canada child benefits,GST/HST rebates, guaranteed income supplement for low income seniors, and rent geared to income housing subsidies need to know your tax information to apply and receive benefits, says Hobbs.

"It's helpful for seniors, housing insecure, new Canadians, people with disabilities, seniors, and youth," explains Hobbs. "Those that are not the best served by the system. We hope to remove these barriers."

These free income tax return clinics start on Feb. 29 and will be offered by appointment every Thursday in Wilberforce at the Lloyd Watson Community Centre. Clinics will alternate each week and offer appointments in Minden at the Community Food Centre on Tuesdays and in Haliburton at the Youth Hub every Monday (with the exception of Mar. 4th, when appointments will be held at the Legion).

Only those with a modest income may book an appointment. Those with incomes that primarily come from employment, pensions, disability benefits, and EI are welcomed to book an appointment. Complex tax situations include rental income, self employment, and foreign income.

Taxes are a gatekeeper to those that crucially need the funds to support themselves and survive, says Hobbs.

If you or someone you know would like to make an appointment with the free income tax clinic, call Rachel at 705-306-0565 or email rachel@centralfoodnetwork.org. You will be told what information you need to bring to your appointment and be matched with the perfect tax expert. At your appointment, a drink and snack will be served and their volunteer will work with you to ensure your taxes get filed correctly. The tax clinics have ensured welcoming and inclusive spaces to make the tax process as painless as possible.

Shakin' things up

Shawn Smandych shakes up a cocktail for trivia night last Thursday at Ommmh … Eat Cheeserie + Cocktails in Minden. /TIM YANO Special to the *Times*

The crowd was full of laughs at trivia hosted by the hilarious Adam Crockatt.

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1		8		4			7	
	2				5			
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7		1						
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	7		6			5		
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Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 14

‘Just here to help’: Kirsten Monk’s story

by **THOMAS SMITH**
Editor

Kirsten Monk, left, and Barry Cray, right, have ran the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home under the family name for 50 years this year. /THOMAS SMITH Staff

“My parents bought the funeral home in 1975. This business has only been owned by literally, two different families,” begins Kirsten Monk, Managing Director of the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home. “One was the Welch family and they started it in 1874 and then my parents, Gordon and Donna bought it in 1975. We moved from Georgetown, not knowing a soul. Dad was in the funeral business when I was born, but then he left it because there really wasn’t a position for him in the funeral home that he was working at.”

John Welch worked as a blacksmith and cabinetmaker who started a funeral business where he would make caskets out of his shop. Over time, Welch built a chapel and set up a preparation room in the back of the garage. The Monk’s current house beside their funeral home acted as the first place for visitations. Prior to that, funerals often took place out of people’s own homes.

As a child, Monk didn’t know what she wanted to be when she grew up.

“School and I struggle, I had a mild form of dyslexia so it was always a challenge,” says Monk. “So I never really focused on what I wanted to be, I was just always focusing on to get through the school.”

“I grew up not wanting anything to do with the funeral business, but it evolved,” says Monk. “I was in high school and I didn’t know what I wanted to do with my life and back then you went in and you filled out a form and they submitted it in the computer and it came back funeral director.”

“Not me, anybody but me,” begged Monk.

After the encouragement from her principal and the event of a family tragedy, Monk began to see funeral services in a different light.

“Back then, funeral services wasn’t as it is now like there was a lot of fear around it and a lot of unknown. Whereas now, we are quite openly talking about what the business is about.”

“It was a male dominated business when I went through school, it’s now a female dominated business,” says Monk with a smile.

“When I went through school, women were not readily accepted as funeral directors,” explains Monk. “In fact, one teacher in particular made a point of calling me princess and daddy’s girl. Even my classmates would be like ‘you’re only in it for the name, you won’t be there for long. You can’t lift. You’re really not here for this.’”

“I just smile now, because when I became president of the Ontario Funeral Services Association, I kinda had a little different view because I was the second female that ever became the president and I was the youngest one that ever became president.”

Monk looks back on the naysayers of the past and laughs.

After school, Monk decided to return to the family business in Minden to experience all aspects of the funeral business.

In 2025, the Monk family will celebrate 50 years of running the home and living on the property.

Monk is proud to operate her business in the community. Recently, they opened their doors to the Ctrl Art Del theatre group, who needed an emergency replacement rehearsal space. On occasion, the Rotary Club also has meetings in the funeral home.

Saturdays are the most common days for funerals.

“Everybody wants Saturdays. Some will ask for Sundays but I try to dissuade for two reasons,” explains Monk. “Ministers, for one thing, they’re already busy, they’re doing services, some have multiple charges.”

While they avoid booking funerals on Sundays, they will do so if needed.

“We work 7 days a week, 24 hours a day 365 days a year,” says Monk.

Monk says that her business is constantly fluctuating.

“I couldn’t tell you when my busy time is, it’s busy when it’s busy, and it’s quiet when it’s quiet.”

“When I started out in the 80s and 90s, yes. I mean, on the holidays, I can recall sometimes we would be going all night,” says Monk. With RIDE programs and changing societal acceptances, they have seen a major decrease in fatalities correlating with holidays, says Monk.

Monk says that her experience of seeing accidents of drinking and driving made her instill the importance of a designated driver in their two sons.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on their business and their procedures.

“We were scared. We were like everyone,” explains Monk. “We didn’t know what to expect. The regulatory body put the fear of you-know-what into us.”

“We didn’t know if we were going to get it. There was no research for us. So what if we handled somebody that died of COVID-19, were we going to get it,” explains Monk, “ Back when AIDS came out, back in the 90s, there was a fear because embalming was about blood being removed from the body, so were we exposing ourselves? Were we exposing ourselves to AIDS?”

“So there was a big controversy over: do you embalm somebody with AIDS? What was our rights, per se,” says Monk. “They were recommending that we get these full hazmat suits, so we did.”

“The first time we finally used one was 30 years later when the first COVID-19 call came in cause we didn’t know what to expect.” says Monk.

The Monk’s business is heavily regulated by the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO). Everything from their website, to their files, to VISA statements, physical inspections of vans, and assortment of caskets are regulated by the BAO.

“Honestly, we’re just here to help. We really are. No one really knows what to expect a lot of the times when they come in. You wonder why I do this, even this long, but you feel such comfort knowing that when they leave, they know that things are looked after,” says Monk. “The things that they feared; where am I going to start, how am I going to find the answers, I’m that first person. I’m able to give them that advice and help them and put their minds at ease. I’m helping them with cancelling pensions that they had, applying for pensions.”

“I’m only here to do what you want. I’m not here to upsell you,” explains Monk. “I’m not here to tell you what you have to do, I’m here to hear you out and help you out to do whatever you want.”

There are often immense struggles leading up to a death, with a vast amount of medical appointments and heartache.

“It is for the living, it’s remembering a life lived and not grieving for a life lost.”

When asked what her favourite part of the business is, Monk was quick to answer.

“The eulogies, I’ll always remember those,” says Monk.

Monk loves the close knit community of Minden and Haliburton County. She takes great pride in providing guidance to those experiencing emotional turmoil.

“I find it harder when I don’t know somebody because I can’t relate. When I know somebody I can tell stories about them,” explains Monk, “I had a family, we were laughing and they were like ‘never thought I’d come into a funeral home and laugh so much while making arrangements.

“When I started out, it was a funeral. It was a somber thing,” recounts Monk. “The funny thing about it is, anybody you talk in this town to, they still remember my dad. He used to tell the best jokes. That was very uncommon in 1975, you know, you came into the funeral home and you were supposed to be somber.”

Just like her father, Monk and her partner Barry Cray often use comedy to lighten the moods of those coming to their funeral home.

“Everybody’s afraid to find a bit of humor but that’s what they could use, is a bit of humour,” says Monk.

The Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home is also the workplace of Harvey Somerville, the family’s compassion dog.

The Monk’s refer to him as ‘Canadian’ as he is part border collie, Australian shepherd, great pyrenese, and German shorthair.

“That’s why I call him Canadian, cause after all, aren’t we all a mix?” says Monk with a laugh.

Harvey is considered the funeral home’s official greeter, but will only make an appearance around those comfortable. Harvey Somerville has a penchant for finding snacks and other goodies in people’s bags.

Dogs are more frequently allowed to attend funerals and visitations.

“Dogs grieve, animals grieve and they need to,” explains Monk. “We had a family where the dog wasn’t there when the man died. When they brought him in, he went right up and got right up to the casket and smelled his owner, and he knew then, and he calmed right down.”

Harvey Somerville’s grandmother was brought to her owner’s funeral and stayed near the casket until burial, even jumping in the truck transporting him to the cemetery. Her owner mentioned to the Monk family that she had puppies and her son knew at first site that Harvey would join the family.

“I enjoy that sense of knowing I made a difference in a difficult time. I feel not enjoyment, but satisfaction,” says Monk, “I enjoy that I am always learning. I never thought that I would say that, but I’m always learning new things and that I’m always able to offer advice.”

Monk says the most difficult part of being the funeral director is the time commitment that is associated with the job. As the Monks are on call 24/7, there have been Christmases where they receive ‘the call’. Monk wants to make sure that the public knows that anyone can call them at any time.

“I grew up fearing death for the longest time,” says Monk. “My mortality growing up, I definitely feared it. I’ve grown comfort in it but honestly I don’t think about it much right now.”

“This county is amazing,”says Monk.“I feel that people know that we will go above and beyond.”

“We don’t put a pierce tag on everything,” says Cray.

The Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home has a transparent pricelist on their website, even before it was made a requirement across all funeral homes in Ontario. They pride themselves in keeping their prices as low as they can in order to support customers from all walks of life.

Currently, Kirsten and Barry have no plans for celebrating the 50th anniversary of the home being under the Monk family name.

The fast and the iciest

A great weekend for racing! The sun was shining beautifully on Saturday. Dozens of ice racing fans gathered to watch the ice races all day. Some folks had no idea the ice races take place in Minden during the winter and were drawn in by the roaring of the engines. /THOMAS SMITH Staff

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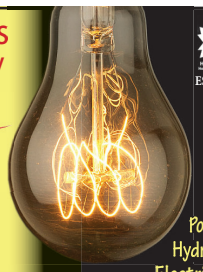

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In Loving Memory of

William Roy Dillon

William (Bill) Roy Dillon, 84, passed away peacefully on Wednesday February 21, 2024 surrounded by family at the Haliburton Highlands Hospital.

William is survived by his beloved wife and best friend of 63 years, Donna Darlene Dillon. Together they loved to travel around the world and spent 10 winters in Florida. He loved to watch all kinds of sports and enjoyed the morning crossword. He was a good father who always took care of his children and did the best he could to teach and guide them, a loving and involved grandfather and great-grandfather to many.

Loving father of Cheryl Dillon (Colin), Terri Johnson (Dozer), John Dillon (Jodi), and Jodi Stamp (Jeff); proud grandfather to Shawna, Jesse (Kelly), Seanna (Chris), Shelby, Jami (Steven), Dillon, Frankie (Julia), Johnathan (Stephanie), Brayden (Juniper), McKenna, Parker (Tyler), and Cayden (Alyson); and proud great-grandfather to Riah, Brady, Quinlee, Aster, Ella, William and Emmett. He was predeceased by his parents Ellen and John Dillon, his brother Jack Dillon and wife Ann Dillon, brothers-in-law Ken Strum and Donny Sinclair. Dear brother of Irene Strum, brother in-law of Carol Dunham (Brian), and Cindy Sinclair. He will be missed by many beloved nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

William was a strong, proud and good man. He is loved and will be missed by many. Although our hearts are heavy, we will celebrate his life and find comfort that he is at peace watching over us.

A celebration of life service will be held at a later date.

Memorial Donations to the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation (HHHSF) would be appreciated by the family and can be arranged through the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home Ltd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0.

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This week

An elk on Eagle

A reeent spotting of a female elk has captured everyone's attention on Eagle Lake.

Page 7

The map man

Creating maps is not only a passion but is also an avid past time for the Beaudrys.

Page 2

Notable quotes:

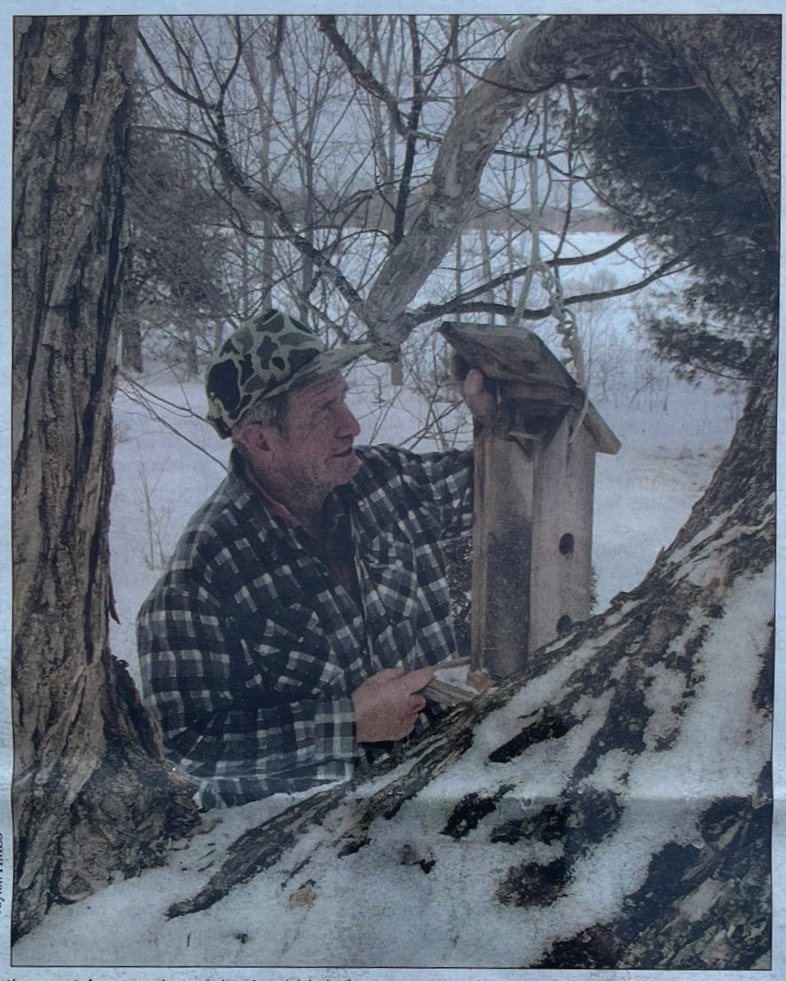
"We're not out to change municipalities. We just want to have a community centre"

Don Dyson, page 4

Commentary:

"Let's get this straight – Ross Rigney, our reeve, said the town cannot afford to help the 911 committee, but the town will water the flowers."

Letter from Charles Gerditschke, page 8



Allison Taylor/TIMES

In the past few weeks, eight dead birds have appeared on Joe Rivers' Deep Bay Road lawn. To reduce the risk of salmonella, he's cleaned out all of his bird feeders; other avian enthusiasts are asked to do the same.

Salmonella outbreak going to the birds in Minden

by ALLISON TAYLOR
Times staff

With eight dead birds spread eagle on his property within the last two week, Joe Rivers knew something was up and whatever it was, it was falling erratically from the skies over his Minden home.

"We didn't know what was happening so I decided to make a few calls," Rivers said standing in the middle of his front yard last week off Deep Bay Road.

Fresh snow had fallen and was now covering the ground where the dead birds were found only days ago..

With at least five feeders located strategically around his house and a variety of birds paying homage to the seed he dishes out on a regular basis, Rivers didn't know he was the latest victim of a salmonella epidemic that hit the province in January.

After he found the third or fourth bird puffing it's feathers and falling dead around the base of the feeders, River's knew that something was up.

One of his first phone calls was to the Minden Animal Clinic.

"We've had a couple of calls and have heard some reports of sick birds in the area," said the clinic's veterinarian Peter Bennett.

There have been reports of birds dropping from the skies in Norland, Minden Hills and around the county; the source of the concern wasn't officially identified until recently.

Bennett sent a few samples from dead birds to the Canadian Co-operative Wildlife Health Centre at the University of Guelph. Just recently they learned the results. The clinic has officially identified one dead bird with having salmonella in its system. The bird tested was an Evening Grossbeak and is the only bird in the county to be officially identified with the infectious bacteria known as salmonella.

see SONGBIRDS *page 4*

New Minden Hills CAO to start in April

Gerry Morrison comes with 20 years' experience

by ALLISON TAYLOR
Times staff

It's been months in the making but Minden Hills council can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The search for a new chief administrative officer and clerk for the municipality is officially closed as council announced the newest addition to the township's payroll at a cmeeting last week.

In a unanimous decision during a closed-door meeting on February 28, Minden Hills hired Gerry Morrison to end the CAO search that began last October.

Morrison brings better than 20 years of municipal experience to the council table, Reeve Ross Rigney said during a break from the council meeting. He currently is the clerk/treasurer/administrator in the Cramahe Township in Colborne, where he has worked for the past 10 years.

"We're very pleased," Rigney said. "We're glad to get him. We got a good guy."

Within the next week Morrison will be house hunting in the area with his family.

There were four candidates in this round of interviews. The municipality was in negotiations with a prospective candidate at the end of January, but an agreement between the two parties could not be reached. Minden Hills advertised for the position again in February and found Morrison to fill the void starting in April.

Treasurer Mary Jane Irwin has been filing the role as acting CAO-Clerk since the departure of Tammy McKelvey in January. She will continue with her role as treasurer.

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